United Nations A/55/122

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 July 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fifth session
Item 28 of the preliminary list*
Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Background

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/100 of 9 December 1999, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution. This report provides a brief resume of the status of the cooperative relationship between ECO and various United Nations organizations during 1999 and 2000.

II. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

2. The activities under the ongoing United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-sponsored project entitled "Capacity-building of the ECO secretariat" were reviewed during a Tripartite Review Meeting between ECO, UNDP and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) representatives held in the ECO secretariat on 20 May 2000. The execution of the project until now has resulted in the provision of equipment, the training of relevant staff and the development of a local area network in the Secretariat. At the trilateral meeting, it was decided to extend the ongoing project up to the year 2001. The UNDP/ECO work programme for the year 2000 was also approved, with emphasis on enhancing the institutional capacity of the ECO secretariat as well as greater interaction among the member States and with the Secretariat.

III. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

3. A Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was concluded in November 1999. The Memorandum of Understanding determines the principles as well as the areas of cooperation between the two organizations in developing trade and related activities in the ECO region. UNCTAD is also due to participate in the implementation of the ECO/Islamic Development Bank (IDB)/Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)/UNCTAD Joint Project on "Introduction of Multimodal Transport Operations in the ECO Region".

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IV. International Trade Centre (ITC)

4. ECO also established contacts with the International Trade Centre (ITC). As a joint subsidiary organ of the World Trade Organization and UNCTAD, ITC is expected to support developing and transition economies of Central Asian member States and Azerbaijan. Already, ITC has started work on a project entitled "Increasing intra-trade in the ECO region" and furnished the results of the first phase of the project on trade flow analysis of ECO member countries to the ECO secretariat.

V. International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)

5. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between ECO and the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), a World Bank affiliate, in June 1999. The Memorandum of Understanding is expected to produce cooperation in relevant areas between the two organizations in order to promote food security and alleviate poverty in the ECO region.

VI. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

6. A joint ECO/IDB/FAO/ICARDA identification mission is expected to visit selected ECO member countries in order to formulate viable projects/ programmes in the agricultural sector that will help alleviate poverty, eradication of hunger and increase food security for the ECO region.

VII. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

7. A joint ECO-United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) conference on "Expanding Contraceptive Choice and Improving Quality of Reproductive Health Programme" was held in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2000.

VIII. United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)

8. The ECO-United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) project on establishing a Drug Control Coordination Unit (DCCU) in the Secretariat, which is a key element of the ECO Plan of Action on Drug Control is now under implementation. Following the visit by a UNDCP consultant to the ECO secretariat in July 1999, the project became operational on 25 July 1999.

9. Under the project, two Task Force meetings of the ECO member States were held in the ECO secretariat in February 2000. The representatives from UNDCP headquarters and from the local UNDCP office in Tehran also attended these meetings.

10. A joint ECO-DCCU team comprising the ECO Database Officer and the DCCU Programme Officer visited all ECO member States (excluding Afghanistan) to make an inventory of requisite needs of the member States with respect to integrating DCCU with national focal points for active and continuous exchange of data/information on drug control in the ECO region.

IX. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

11. A Technical Assistance Grant Agreement was signed between ECO and IDB during September 1999, following which the joint ECO/IDB/ESCAP/UNCTAD project on "Introduction of International Multimodal Transport Operations in the ECO Region" is expected to come into operation in the near future. The project will be implemented with the technical assistance of ESCAP and UNCTAD.

12. Within the context of trade and investment information networking in the ECO region, relations with ESCAP continued to grow in the past year with the participation by ECO in the ESCAP meeting of the 11th Steering Group of the Committee on Regional Economic Cooperation, held in Bangkok in September 1999, where regional trading arrangements and the integration of developing countries into the international trading system were discussed.

13. In the field of environment and natural resources development, ECO participated in the Subregional Meeting on Strategic Environmental Management for the Central Asian Countries held in Tehran from 14 to 16 February 2000. ECO has been invited to participate in the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, to be held in Kitakyushu, Japan, from 31 August to 4 September 2000.

14. Subject to availability of funding in 2000-2001, an ECO Minerals Expert Group Meeting is planned, to be hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in cooperation with ESCAP.

15. ECO was not able to participate in the current year's ESCAP-sponsored Fifth Consultative Meeting among Executive Heads of Subregional Organizations and ESCAP, held in Bangkok on 8 June 2000, owing to its own annual Council of Ministers Meeting on the same date, followed by the Sixth ECO Summit on 10 June 2000.

X. World Trade Organization

16. ECO's relations and cooperation with the World Trade Organization continued to develop further during the past year. ECO attended the 25th session of the World Trade Organization Committee on Trade and Development held in Geneva in June 1999, as observer and also attended the Third World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference held in Seattle, United States of America, in November-December 1999. A joint ECO-World Trade Organization Seminar on Trade Negotiation Simulation was also held in the ECO secretariat during 6-10 May 2000.